

**Workshop no. and title:** 4. The impact of the food crisis on chronic refugee and IDP situations  
**Rapporteur:** Elsebeth Krogh

**Main points of discussion:**

*Experience from Sudan:*

- In a 39 year long refugee situation most have received food aid for 30 years.
- One obstacle to moving into longer term solutions is that donors have specific priorities and not willing to issue longer term funding to some of the needy areas.
- Another issue is lack of leadership and coordination with government policies which e.g. pose obstacles to access to land. No attempts to coordinate with govt. - not considered primary stakeholder with responsibilities. Advocacy element of trying to reverse policies was missing.
- Many refugees are good producers but market access and infrastructure missing. Oxfam has been piloting cash intervention modality.

*Burmese refugees in Thailand:*

- More than 20 years refugee situation.
- Given basic rice assistance and then they found ways of supporting themselves in local areas.
- Used to be relatively small camps - that changed when security situation worsened. (7 to 25000)
- Thai authorities fenced people in and prevented them on engaging in activities outside. Not allowed to work - or even to go outside camps. If they go outside they risk being deported.
- What the food crisis did: awakened responsibility of international community to take a more active role and working together to change national policy.
- It is an artificial economy - there is enough work in agriculture and local industry. But as they are not allowed to work the local industry does not want to engage with the refugees.
- Livelihood strategies about building up communities - community based solutions. Not just a question of raising income. Put more money and effort into community management in the beginning.

*WFP experience from Tchad:*

- Attempt to build up a coordinated approach
- But you need to involve different types of organisations
- And funding decisions are not made jointly
- Resulting in only partial funding of the coordinated approach

*General points:*

- We need to work more with local authorities. We are often seen as just service providers delivering aid to people.
- People should have access to food rather than be given food. Cash for work combined w/food for work should also be tried in refugee situations.
- We should have a mixed toolbox to address different types of situations.

**Main challenges:**

- Donor preferences (in some areas only willing to fund short term emergency aid)
- Lack of advocacy vis-à-vis the government for policy changes (e.g. land laws)
- Lack of markets and infrastructure
- Interventions often driven by resources available and not by needs on the ground.
- Confinement to camp - freedom of movement - otherwise NGO drive livelihoods projects in an artificial economy.
- Inflexible funding mechanisms due to extreme categorisation of humanitarian versus dev. aid.
- Obstacles in extreme categorisation of humanitarian versus dev. aid. Funding mechanisms of donors

should be more flexible.

-Use of cash transfers -more willingness of donors to do that.

-The coord.body (OCHA) should provide us with the informed analysis of the different forms of engagement needed in different contexts

- What would happen if we provided cash instead of a food basket. Would that stimulate a legitimate kind of trade or black market?

-Donors don't like to see people having cash-not the image of a 'needy' person!

**Suggested actions:** NB! Proposed actions are all interlinked!

The premise of the proposed actions is to promote the right to food.

- Chronic situations require **flexible, coordinated approaches with strong leadership**. That implies strengthening of leadership systems as current ones do not function.

- Suggest multi-year donor commitments to facilitate and support longer term solutions.

- Good example: DFID is pushing agencies to form consortia as a possible way forward to ensure coordinated interventions (as seen in Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan).

- We need a **self-reliance strategy from the outset** when we set up camps. Difficult to break the cycle - met with local resistance. Including rights based approach and dialogue with people. And a mixed toolbox for different situations.

-**Contextual analysis** needed for making rights decisions about interventions. In Sudan this work is done by Tuft University and not driven or taken up by the UN actors. Experience from the Tuft Livelihoods Project should be channelled into the bigger structures and organisations.

- **Local procurement**. Review commodities you distribute with something cheaper with same nutritional value. Try finding local alternatives or support local production of alternatives. Limiting purchasing obstacles, ensure untied and unrestricted purchasing.

- We need to pay more attention to **what responsibilities national governments have**. National donor govt. should address this: Where is e.g. the pressure on the Sudanese authorities? The advocacy element of our work should not be driven by NGOs but also by donor govts. -(NB in a concerted manner!)

- Donors should produce **purchasing power instead of producing commodities** - support people, local communities and markets by giving the money back to the people and let them make purchasing decisions.

- Develop **cash transfer programmes** where feasible - where there is a market. Look at money transfers, innovative voucher systems etc.

-Should experience with cash and trading initiatives in camps. Traders find their way to camps if the money is there. But we should move from small experiments in small camps into something of volume. Solutions may need to be adjusted to fit local conditions as e.g. priorities of national govts.

- Support economic activities by **building roads and other infrastructure** so that refugees get access to markets. Connect farmers with markets.